



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/637,094	08/06/2003	Bruno Ghyselen	4717-6300	9064
28765	7590	06/15/2006	EXAMINER	
WINSTON & STRAWN LLP 1700 K STREET, N.W. WASHINGTON, DC 20006			PHAM, THANH V	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2823	

DATE MAILED: 06/15/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/637,094	Applicant(s) GHYSELEN ET AL.	
	Examiner Thanh V. Pham	Art Unit 2823	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 May 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 and 23-26 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 and 23-26 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Transitional After Final Practice

1. The Declaration by inventors filed on 05/16/2006 under 37 CFR 1.131 is sufficient to overcome the Vuong et al. US 2004/0017574 A1 reference. However, to completely satisfy rule 119, applicant is request to submit an English language translation of the provisional application and a statement that the translation is accurate.
2. The Finality of the previous office action is withdrawn. This office action is made non-final.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.

4. Claims 1-8, 12, 16-20, 23 and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by Wilson et al. US Pub. 2002/0032499 A1.

Re claims 1 and 16, the Wilson et al. reference teaches a method for adjusting the thickness of a thin semiconductor material layer, the abstract, which comprises:

measuring the layer [0030], e.g., to establish a thickness profile [0029], e.g.;

comparing the measured thickness profile with stored standard profiles [0041], e.g.,

wherein each standard profile is stored in association with respective thickness adjustment specifications [0052], e.g.;

selecting a stored standard profile to associate said layer with the respective thickness adjustment specification [0030], e.g.; and

adjusting the thickness of said layer by simultaneously treating the entire surface of said layer selectively in accordance with the thickness adjustment specification [0040]- [0042], e.g. (re claim 1) or applying thickness adjustments simultaneously and selectively to the entire layer surface, wherein the adjustments differ depending on location on the layer surface, [0037], e.g. (re claim 16).

Re claim 2, the thickness adjustment specifications are recipes, [0029], e.g.

Re claim 3, the method further comprises establishing association between the stored standard profiles and the recipes [0037], e.g.

Re claim 4, the method further comprises establishing associations by using an algorithm having a target specification input for thickness profile established for layer fabrication [0025], e.g.

Re claim 5, the method further comprises using identical meshes to establish the thickness measurements, the standard profiles, and the target specification [0024], e.g.

Re claim 6, the method further comprises automatically reactivating the configuration algorithm on each change of target specification to establish a new configuration defining correspondences between the standard profiles and the recipes [0038], e.g.

Re claims 7-8, the method further comprises storing at least one configuration associated with the thickness measurement or a plurality of configurations, and selecting a desired configuration [0030], [0038], [0079], e.g.

Re claim 12, wherein the algorithm selects categories of recipes as a function of thickness differences between the target and the standard profile to establish a configuration, without searching through all recipes [0042] and fig. 4, e.g.

Re claim 17, which further comprises adjusting the layer thickness by sacrificial oxidation, [0010], e.g.;

Re claims 18-19 and 26, the method further comprises treating batches of layer, wherein one layer thickness in the batch is adjusted by a certain given pitch while a subsequent layer thickness is being measured; wherein the layers of a given batch share the same final target thickness, and the recipe for each layer is individualized to ensure that once thickness adjustment has been completed, a mean layer thickness is obtained for the batch that is as close as possible to the common target [0023]+[026]+[0036], e.g.;

Re claim 20, wherein the recipes correspond to at least one of uniform thickness modification across the layer, or differential thickness modification across the layer [0029] and [0030], e.g.

Re claim 23, wherein each standard profile is stored in storing means [0024] and the measured thickness profile is compared with stored standard profiles by a processor unit (fig. 1) associated with the storing means, with the processor configured to receive measurements made on the layer from thickness measuring means, and to forward thickness adjustment specifications to thickness adjustment means, fig. 3, e.g.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

6. Claims 9-11 and 13-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson et al. as applied to claims 1-8, 12, 16-20, 23 and 26 above, and further in view of Ferrell et al. US 6,751,343 B1.

The Wilson et al. reference though teaches a method as in the above, refers to use of data-gathering criterion to test/compare whether sufficient data about the structure is available to perform the model and parameter selection and make a final selection of optimization parameters based on one or more selection criteria [0023]-[0024]; it discloses **neither** the tree structure defining categories and sub-categories with a desired number of levels (*re claim 9*), finer and finer levels of detail (*re claim 11*), wherein the high level categories of recipes in the recipe tree structure include: a first high level recipe category defining a uniform thickness adjustment specification for the entire surface of the layer; and additional high level categories depending on overall distribution parameters for thickness adjustment specifications over the surface (*re claim 15*) **nor** establishing a link between a starting level of a standard profile tree structure and an arrival level of a recipe tree structure, such that for each standard profile belonging to a given category of starting level there exists an arrival level category of recipes; searching for a recipe for a standard profile at the starting level by automatically directing the search towards the arrival level category; and continuing the search by going deeper into the recipe tree structure to establish a configuration (*re claim 13*).

The Ferrell et al. reference teaches a system and method for indexing and retrieving data for subsequent fast retrieval (col. 2, lines 50-52) so that a corrective action can be quickly taken (col. 2, line 44), the tree diagram of fig. 6 depicts a hierarchical search tree for use with the method of fig. 7 wherein defining categories and sub-categories with desired number of levels and finer and finer levels of detail. The method "has been applied to continuously manufactured web products such as ... thick and thin film ceramics" col. 8, lines 40-43. The "method ... can be subdivided into two process: a method for indexing ... and a method for retrieving, col. 5, lines 62-65. The method for indexing begins in step 10 of fig. 3A, adding feature vector to vector list at step 18, creating node after loading next feature vector then inserting top-down node in indexing tree (steps 28-32 in fig. 3B). Fig. 7 is a flow chart illustrating a method for retrieving information stored in a hierarchical tree structure as in fig. 6. wherein the search for a standard profile at the starting level by automatically directing the search towards the arrival level category (steps 42, 44) and continuing the search by going deeper into the recipe tree structure to establish a configuration (steps 48, 60).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the hierarchical tree structure of Ferrell et al. into the library/tables/matrices of Wilson et al. as the tree structure would be selected in accordance with the method for adjusting the thickness of a thin semiconductor material layer in order to index and retrieve data for subsequent fast retrieval so that a corrective action can be quickly taken in the manufacturing process as taught by Wilson et al.

7. Claims 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Wolf, Silicon Processing for VLSI Era, vol. 1, chapter 7 and applicant's admitted prior art.

Re claim 24, the Wilson et al. reference discloses substantially all of the instant invention but does not disclose use of ellipsometer or reflectometer in measuring the thickness. Wolf discloses "various techniques are available for measuring oxide thickness" including "automated ellipsometry equipment", page 235. To employ automated ellipsometry equipment for measuring the layer thickness would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the semiconductor coating art as the automated ellipsometry equipment would be selected in accordance with the thickness control after measurement and consideration of related parameters in a method for adjusting the thickness of a thin semiconductor material layer as taught by Wilson et al.

Re claim 25, the Wilson reference does not mention to a particular hydrogen annealing. The applicant's admitted prior art, US 6,403,450 provide by the applicant, teaches hydrogen annealing is "an additional step of annealing the substrate is added to enable the layer to be cured of surface irregularities generated during oxidation and during the preceding steps in the method of preparing the thin layer" (the instant specification's page 25). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to provide the process of Vuong et al. with the known step as taught by applicant's admitted prior art because the additional step would provide the process of Vuong with the cure for the formed layer.

Conclusion


8. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

9. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Thanh V. Pham whose telephone number is 571-272-1866. The examiner can normally be reached on M-Th (6:30-5:00).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Matthew Smith can be reached on 571-272-1907. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

06/05/2006


GEORGE R. FOURSON
PRIMARY EXAMINER